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THE FOLLY, INFAMY, AND MISERY OF UNLAWFUL PLEASURE.

A SERMON

Preached before the GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the CHURCH of SCOTLAND, May 25. 1760.

By JAMES FORDYCE, D. D.

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BRITISH
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MAR

TO

His Grace

CHARLES LORD CATHCART,

his Majesty's High Commissioner

TO

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, MAY MDCCLX.;

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,

PREACHED BEFORE HIS GRACE,

AND

PUBLISHED AT HIS DESIRE,

IS

IN TESTIMONY

OF THAT ESTEEM,

WHICH IS DUE TO DISTINGUISHED VIRTUE,

AND

OF THAT GRATITUDE,

WHICH PECULIAR OBLIGATIONS CLAIM,

MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

JAMES FORDYCE.

BRITISH
30
61
MAR

A SERMON ON

Prov. vii. 7.

I LOOKED,—AND BEHELD AMONG THE SIMPLE ONES, I DISCERNED AMONG THE YOUTHS, A YOUNG MAN VOID OF UNDERSTANDING.

HAVING formed a variety of reſolutions with regard to the ſubject on which I ſhould addreſs you, my honoured hearers, on this occaſion; having found myſelf diſſatisfied with them all, for one reaſon or another; and having felt a growing apprehenſion, that the very great reſpect to which this audience is entitled, would not leave me ſufficient recollection and preſence of mind, to explain myſelf in ſo eaſy, free, and natural a manner, upon a particular argument that ſtruck me,

me; I at length determined, contrary to my firſt intention, to read to you a diſcourſe, which, I am afraid, may appear leſs proper, but which, I am perſuaded, cannot be deemed improper in an age of domineering pleaſure, like this; an age, that amidſt many valuable improvements in arts and ſciences, and many high exertions of civil and military virtue, which diſtinguiſh it, doth ſtill retain too much of that luxury and effeminacy, which ſome ſerious writers, and many ſerious men, have ranked amongſt its characteriſtic features.

The very lively and affecting paſſage, of which our text is a part, I leave to your attentive peruſal, and pious reflexion, when you go home. Let it ſuffice to obſerve in the mean time, that it preſents us with the moſt ſtriking picture, which perhaps is any where to be met with, of a young man enſnared by the blandiſhments of an abandoned, but artful woman, into whoſe evening-walks he had thrown himſelf, with a fatal purpoſe, as it ſhould ſeem, to indulge the impulſe of his paſſions, under the covert of night, eſteeming that the fitteſt ſeaſon for thoſe works of darkneſs. The character which our divine proverbialiſt gives of this unhappy youth, is ſtrongly pointed, and merits our particular attention: "I looked and be-"held," ſaith he, "among the ſimple ones, "I diſcerned among the youths, a young "man void of underſtanding:" a character, which viewed in the connexion wherein it ſtands, will, I doubt not, on a little conſidera-

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tion, appear exceeding juſt. To prove it ſuch, by entering into the detail, and to apply it, as indeed it is but too applicable, to thoſe young perſons of the preſent age, who are ſeduced into the purlieus of criminal indulgence, and trained on by the enticements of evil communication, will, with God's aſſiſtance, be the buſineſs of the following addreſs. How happy ſhould the preacher account himſelf, if any thing that ſhall be ſuggeſted, might be uſeful, by God's bleſſing, either to recover, were it but one youth, who hath been entangled by that wheedling, pernicious proſtitute, called, by the world's courteſy, pleaſure, or to guard the unexperienced and unwary part of this congregation, who may be in danger from her deadly ſnares! Now I will endeavour to demonſtrate, that the young man, who gives himſelf over to voluptuouſneſs, is really void of underſtanding, inaſmuch as he wants taſte in what belongs to genuine pleaſure; ſentiment in what relates to true glory; and prudence in point of his moſt important intereſts.

I. I will ſhew that he wants taſte in what belongs to genuine pleaſure, that is, on the very ſubject which he pretends to underſtand beſt, and where he even piques himſelf on the ſuppoſed ſuperiority of his ſkill. Suffer me, my dear hearer, whoever you are, whom this diſcourſe doth chiefly concern, to convince you how much you are miſtaken in your favourite ſyſtem, by ſhewing that the uncontrolled gratification of your appetites deprives you of the

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very ſatisfaction you aim at, robs you of a thouſand delights of a much higher reliſh, and expoſeth you to innumerable pains, which far overbalance the pleaſures you are ſo fond of.

1. I ſay that the unbridled purſuit of ſenſual enjoyments defeats its own intention. Such is the wiſe and righteous appointment of Providence, to deter men from diſhonouring their maker, and themſelves, that exceſs of every kind, and this eſpecially, deſtroys the very end it ſeeks, hurts the body as well as the mind, and diſappoints the benevolent purpoſes of nature, by going beyond them. I appeal, my friend, to your own experience: Do not you feel your conſtitution impaired and dulled by a courſe of intemperance? Are you not forced, if you will continue the chace you are engaged in, to ſpur your jaded deſires, by all the methods which fancy, variety, and a ſuper-refined luxury can furniſh? Theſe indeed may ſerve to inflame your paſſions, but, alas! the more they are inflamed, the farther are they from being ſatisfied. New objects may excite new propenſions; but the diverſity of the one doth not keep pace with the violence of the other. The rage of pleaſure grows, but the ſenſe of it diminiſheth; till at laſt you do not ſo properly purſue it, as you are dragged along by it. The attachment and liking to it are in a great meaſure ſoon over: mere uſe and habit hurry you headlong. It is poſſible indeed you ſet out with reſolutions of reſtraining yourſelf within

in certain fancied bounds of ſobriety and prudence, of preſerving a ſort of œconomy and coolneſs, in the indulgence of your inclinations. Have you adhered to theſe reſolutions? Have you practiſed this ſelf-command for any ſpace of time? Is your bent to ſinful gratifications no ſtronger now, than when you firſt gave way to them? Can you ſtill ſtop, when and where you pleaſe? Can you ſay to the incroaching current of paſſion, "Hitherto ſhalt thou come, "and no farther?" Ah the vanity and illuſion that are inſeparable from ſin, the ſelf-deceit and folly of ſinners! to think that they can tranſgreſs with ſafety the boundaries of innocence, or anſwer for themſelves, that having once entered on the declivity of vice, they ſhall not ſlide into a quicker and quicker progreſs, till at length they ſink into all "the ſuperfluity of "naughtineſs."

NOTHING more common than for the ſons of intemperance to boaſt of their reaſon, their refinement, their ſentiments, and the like. But have they cauſe to do ſo? Your brethren of the ſtall, and of the foreſt, eat, and drink, and play, and gratify the appetites of nature, in due ſeaſon, meaſure, and proportion. Therefore they are well and happy, according to their rank. Thou who art called a man, canſt not pretend to ſo much order and felicity.

THE perſons whoſe character I draw, are proud to ſtyle themſelves men of pleaſure. The world adopts the phraſe, and beſtows it on them freely: but I aver they do not deſerve

this title. You are mere ſenſation-men; you are ſtrangers to ſincere, to real pleaſure. That conſiſts in regularity, and dwells with innocence alone. Figure a young man maſter of his paſſions, diligent in buſineſs, or aſſiduous in ſtudy, ſmitten with the charms of truth, of friendſhip, of virtue, of devotion, following their divine attraction through the ſlippery paths of youth, and in due time entering, with judgment and choice, into that honourable ſtate, which heaven has ordained for the ſupport and comfort of mankind. Will thoſe ungodly men, who forego the chaſte and heart-felt delights of this amiable connection for the bought ſmiles and mercenary careſſes of a harlot, "loveleſs, joyleſs, unendeared," pretend to equal theſe latter to the former, or once to compare their lawleſs, reſtleſs, ſelfiſh purſuits, to the tranquil, the virtuous, the generous joys of an union, which, when wiſely formed, is founded on eſteem, ſupported with fidelity, ſanctified by faith, and ſweetened by mutual ſympathy, truſt, and complacence?

2. I will not attempt to enumerate all the ſuperior gratifications which are forfeited by an irregular life: but ſurely this is a farther conſideration worthy your regard. Surely a ſound mind in a healthful body, moderate deſires, and quiet paſſions, a ſpirit calm and clear, unobſcured by the fumes of intemperance, and undiſturbed by the tumults of luſt, peaceful and pleaſant reflexions on a diſcreet and honourable conduct, manly, rational, and uſeful converſation

verſation, the ſociety, the applauſe, and the patronage of the beſt men, the humble, yet triumphant hope of the friendſhip of God through every future period, with all the ſolid and ſublime conſolations of devotion; ſurely theſe are not things to be raſhly renounced, or lightly eſteemed. If you are ſo unfortunate as to be a ſtranger to theſe things, will it follow that you may boldly contemn, or neglect them? Becauſe you are blind, will you take upon you to ſay, that light is not ſweet, or that it is not "a pleaſant thing for the eyes "to behold the ſun?" If theſe are not bleſſings, and bleſſings too of ineſtimable value, why have they been ſo highly prized, ſo pathetically recommended, ſo ardently ſought, ſo diligently, zealouſly, and perſeveringly cultivated, by the learneſt, the wiſeſt, and the greateſt men of every age, who have been ready to undertake any thing, to ſuffer any thing, to ſacrifice any thing, rather than forego theſe ſweeteſt and nobleſt enjoyments? But I will ſubmit the queſtion to yourſelf; let your own underſtanding judge whether the enjoyments of the mind and of the heart do not bid fair to be the ſweeteſt, becauſe the nobleſt. You are a man, and will you ſay, that the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic pleaſures of a man, I mean, thoſe of reaſon, of conſcience, and of affection, are not better, or more eſtimable, than the pleaſures of an animal, I mean, thoſe of ſenſe and appetite? What? will you give up at once, even in ſpeculation, all the dignity and ſuperior

excellence

excellence of your nature, in order to juſtify to yourſelf the deplorable perverſion of your taſte? But in vain do you labour to juſtify it even to yourſelf. There is, I know there is, ſomething within you, that takes part with uncorrupted nature, and reclaims againſt the vile abuſe. There is ſomething within you, which tells you, at this very moment, you are unhappy, in having forfeited thoſe ſubſtantial and ſacred joys I lately mentioned, for I know not what fantaſtic, frivolous, and mean indulgences. I refer the cauſe to your moſt intimate feelings. Have you not often ſecretly ſighed to think what you loſt, when you loſt your innocence? When you look back on the lovely, joyous ſcenes of childhood and early youth, before your mind was debauched and diſtempered by guilty pleaſures, do you not inwardly wiſh you could recal thoſe bleſſed days, at leaſt that you could regain the peace and eaſe, and gaiety of heart you then poſſeſſed? When you ſee other young perſons of decent characters, and irreproachable morals, chearful, lively, healthy, ſatisfied in themſelves, and beloved by all about them, do not you envy their happy deſtiny, and feel on the compariſon how miſerable you are? In ſuch a view, do you not both deſpiſe and hate yourſelf at bottom, for the folly and futility of your conduct?

I am ſufficiently aware, that amidſt your hours of giddy riot, in the circle of your mad companions, you will be falſe enough to diſguiſe any ſuch feelings, bold enough to deny even

even the deepeſt convictions of your ſoul, to boaſt what a charming life you lead, and in the height of your pride to talk with pity of the ſons of virtue, as a ſet of poor, gloomy-minded creatures. And pray let us hear wherein you have ſuch mighty advantage over them? Why, you have the pleaſure of often getting drunk in the tavern, of frequently revelling in the brothel, perhaps of violating and defiling the marriage-bed, poſſibly of ſeducing and ruining credulous innocence, probably of gaming away your own fortune, credit, and peace, or thoſe of others whom you call your friends; the pleaſure too, no doubt, of laughing at the laws of your country, at the religion of your fathers, at thoſe rules of decency and virtue which ſober Heathens themſelves revere; at all ſerious men, nay at every body that will not run with you into the ſame exceſs of riot; and, for aught I know, the pleaſure of directly blaſpheming him that made you. Great God! what outrages againſt nature, ſociety, and thee, are daily committed by thoſe, who burſting the bounds thou haſt ſo wiſely and mercifully ſet them, reverſe the uſe of thy creatures, diſturb the order of thy world, and having done all they can to deface and deſtroy the beauty of thy creation, both within and without them, turn at laſt their impious fury on thy tremendous majeſty! Theſe, theſe are the men, who talk ſo loud, and ſo big of pleaſure, which they would wholly appropriate to themſelves, as if they alone enjoyed and underſtood it. But

however

however you may rave, Sirs, in your fits of delirium, we believe your hearts ſuggeſt a different language, in your ſober intervals; and ſober intervals you will and muſt have. A man cannot be always in the tavern, nor always in the ſtews, nor always in company; and when he comes to himſelf, and is alone, reaſon will reflect, and conſcience will feel: And would ſuch a man but ſpeak out his feelings, and his reflexions, you would find them—ah how ſad! How would you hear him reproach, if not curſe himſelf, for the deſperate madneſs of ſacrificing to the momentary muddy, groſs indulgences of a ſenſual life, which conſiſt chiefly of a violent agitation of the blood and ſpirits, which cloy the fancy by repetition, pall more and more every day upon the ſenſes, in ſhort, exhauſt and weary the appetites inſtead of ſoothing and delighting them, and are totally inſignificant in ſeaſons of weakneſs and diſtreſs; ſacrificing to theſe, I ſay, the pure, the maſculine, the celeſtial, the immortal pleaſures of a wiſe and pious life; pleaſures that never tire, that never fail, that never decay, but, on the contrary, receive freſh luſtre, and growing improvement from familiarity, from recollection, nay from accidents, from age, from affliction itſelf! Are you conſcious of no ſuch uneaſy feelings or reflexions as theſe, you, to whom I am particularly addreſſing myſelf on this occaſion? If you are, muſt you not confeſs, that the pains which accompany a courſe like yours, though they were no other than thoſe of the mind,

mind, do far overbalance the pleaſures you are ſo fond of? That was,

3. Our next conſideration; and you will give me leave to inſiſt upon it, as a point of great importance in this argument. You will give me leave to aſk you in ſober ſadneſs, as a ſincere wellwiſher of yours, that would willingly ſet you right in what highly concerns you, whether even in the hurry of your unhallowed purſuits, you find that ſatisfaction and ſelf-complacence you are ſo apt to boaſt of; whether you do not perceive at certain moments ſome inward monitor whiſpering to you, "Do not this great evil, and ſin againſt God," pleading with you to have mercy upon your own ſoul, pointing out your danger, and, like an angel with a drawn ſword placed acroſs your way, ſtriving to ſtop you in your wild career? Do not theſe remonſtrances, though inſufficient, it ſeems, to anſwer that end, give you however very diſagreeable checks, which leſſen greatly the gratifications you expected? Do not thoſe gratifications, when you think you have them, and hold them faſt, vaniſh in an inſtant from your eager graſp, and leave nothing but a cloud behind them? I am miſtaken in this laſt particular; it were well if they left nothing more, if they proved at worſt but airy phantoms, that amuſed for a little, diſappeared, and were forgotten. Confeſs you who beſt know, what diſguſts attend the diſappointment; what ſatiety, what bitterneſs, what vexations follow; what cutting remorſes for the paſt, what fearful forebodings

forebodings for the future, what ſecret horrors of conſcious guilt do then haunt you, flaſhing like ſo many ſpectres on your fancy, whilſt all is dark, dark, and deſolate within you. What ſay you, my friends? do you deny it? If you do, then tell us, what mean that reſtleſſneſs and uneaſineſs you ſo often betray on the back of your debauches? Why do you not ſit down and review, with ſerenity and inward approbation, the part you have acted? Why do you ſhun retirement, and ſelf-inſpection? What makes you fly from yourſelves, and your own thoughts, to company, to diverſion, to noiſe, to diſſipation of every kind? What is it you want to loſe there? Lay your hands upon your hearts, and anſwer honeſtly. Is it not the ſevere remembrance of your crimes and diſorders, which you wiſh to ſhake off by that expedient? You know it is. And will any man in earneſt affirm, that thoſe indulgences deſerve the honourable name of pleaſure, which cannot bear to be calmly reflected on, which reaſon will not approve, and on which conſcience refuſeth to beſtow her ſacred ſanction?

What ſhall I ſay farther on this head, or how paint the train of miſchiefs, and of furies that follow the wicked enchantreſs, whoſe hollowneſs and worthleſſneſs I am endeavouring to expoſe? What ſhall I ſay of thoſe diſeaſes, that rottenneſs, thoſe tortures, which her deluded votaries often ſuffer in their bodies; thoſe perplexities, that agitation, thoſe jealouſies, that envy, thoſe reſentments, that almoſt always tear

in

in pieces their minds; with the infinite caprices, reproaches, inſolence, and imprecations, which they muſt often ſwallow from the wretched creatures, who are their accomplices in vice, who, along with the ſweet innocence and charming modeſty that become their ſex, have laid aſide its delicacy, its ſoftneſs, and all its gentleſt graces? What ſhall I ſay of the ſelf-accuſation that diſſolute men muſt needs feel on account of the fooliſh and fruitleſs expence, in which a life of this kind doth unavoidably involve them, from the endleſs inconveniences they draw upon themſelves; from the deſperate courſes to which they are often driven, in order to ſupport their prodigality, or to repair the ruins of a broken fortune; from the complicated diſtreſs they bring upon their parents, families, and friends, which cannot but recoil upon themſelves, if they have any ſparks of ingenuity remaining; and, finally, from the challenges, the cenſures, and the infamy they inevitably incur by a behaviour ſo blameable, and ſo baſe? Suffice it to have juſt mentioned theſe particulars, without entering into a minute deſcription of them; the reverence I feel for the virtuous part of this auditory forbids me to pain them by dwelling on ſcenes that are too ſhocking. But the laſt mentioned particular leads me to the ſecond point, which was,

II. To ſhew that perſons of the character now under conſideration, are void of underſtanding, in as much as they want ſentiments

of true glory. I do not ſay, that they have loſt all inward ſenſe of honour and diſgrace.

I am perſuaded the number of thoſe who are ſo perfectly hardened and flagitious, is in compariſon but ſmall. Conſcience may be ſhamefully ſuppreſſed and overlaid. It often is. But I do hope, it is ſeldom, very ſeldom quite ſubdued, or extinguiſhed. In ſome wretches who are manifeſtly given up of juſt heaven "to a "reprobate mind, to work all uncleanneſs with "greedineſs, it may be feared as with a hot "iron, ſo as to be paſt feeling." But I repeat it again; ſuch total inſenſibility, ſuch callouſneſs of ſoul, is probably very rare. With regard to the generality of ſenſualiſts it may be affirmed, that they have not hitherto been able to overcome wholly, whatever they may pretend, that internal perception of praiſe and of blame, which is ſo deeply inwrought in the human mind. I need not tell you, for what wiſe and excellent purpoſes it was given. They are abundantly apparent. Nevertheleſs it may be aſked with reſpect to thoſe unhappy men in too many inſtances, "Were they aſhamed, when "they committed abomination? They were not "aſhamed, neither did they bluſh. They have "hardened their faces as flint; they declare "their ſin as Sodom; they even glory in their "ſhame." Doubtleſs it requires ſome time thus far to conquer the modeſty of nature. But the ſad conqueſt may be gained.

A young man enters into forbidden paths with a trembling ſtep. The principles of his creation

creation ſhrink back from the horrors of vice. He reddens at the thought of his firſt deviation from virtue. He yet reveres that heavenly form. He ſtarts at the appearance of her worthleſs rival. But, "beguiled by her much "fair ſpeech," to uſe the ſtyle of our inſpired author, impelled by the deſire of what is prohibited, inſtigated very probably by evil companions who have got before him, betrayed by the deceitfulneſs of his heart, working on the ſimplicity of his youth, he ventures forward, he is led on inſenſibly, his appetites take fire as he advanceth, his ſenſe of right and wrong becomes leſs quick and urgent, conſcience is but little heard, and leſs regarded, amidſt the tumult of company, and the clamour of the paſſions.

Its admonitions and reprimands proving officious and troubleſome, as they naturally will do in this ſituation, meet at length with ſuch unkind reception, and violent oppoſition, that, in many caſes, where it was wont to raiſe its awful voice, it ceaſes very much "to be a repro-"ver." The Syren ſong of falſe pleaſure, that "propheſieth ſmother things," is liſtened to with greedy attention. The moſt corrupt and corrupting maxims are collected from every quarter, received with admiration, and entertained with tranſport. Every witling, that can break a miſerable jeſt on revelation and its friends, is ſure of audience and applauſe. Thoſe execrable books that are calculated to inflame and pollute the imagination, and which are the diſhonour and the peſt of the age, with what curioſity are they

they ſought, with what rapture peruſed? Such writings of the infidel tribe, as contain the moſt audacious ſarcaſms againſt whatever is ſerious and ſober, and tend moſt directly to ſubvert the foundations of all religion and morality, are cried up as the very quinteſſence of wit and humour, and the only ſtandards of ingenious controverſy, and fine compoſition. Is it any wonder, if the poor youth I have deſcribed is by this time intoxicated with the cup of folly, adminiſtered to him by ſo many hands; if he grows bold in wickedneſs; if from "walking in the counſel "of ungodly men, and ſtanding in the way of "ſinners," he proceeds at laſt "to ſit in the "chair of the ſcornful," to erect himſelf into the boaſted character of a freethinker, to laugh amongſt his compeers at religion, and law, and decency itſelf, to repreſent thoſe who retain and teſtify a regard for theſe, as daſtardly, low, and little ſouls, ſhackled by the prejudices of education, controlled by the craft of politicians, over-reached by the tricks, and overawed by the terrors of prieſts, and, finally, to applaud himſelf, and his companions, as the only men of ſpirit and vivacity, who have glorioufly broke aſunder thoſe vulgar bands, and aſſerted the original privileges of nature? Deluded man! how little cauſe you have for all this vaunting? pray conſider, and ſay in ſad truth, whether you deſerve ſo much praiſe for a behaviour that degrades your nature, deſtroys your uſefulneſs, injures your neighbour, diſhonours your maker, contradicts the judgment and practice of all the wiſe

wiſe and good, and counteracts the conviction of your own mind. I ſay,

1. THAT your behaviour degrades your nature. You talk of aſſerting her original privileges. But can you ſeriouſly believe that the proper rights of a reaſonable being conſiſt in acting againſt reaſon, that heaven-deſcended principle, which raiſeth a man above a brute? Did your kind creator "make you wiſer than the "beaſts of the field, and teach you more "knowledge than the fowls of heaven," only that you might have it in your power to ſink yourſelf to their level, or rather beneath it? Did he render you capable of the pleaſures of knowledge, of goodneſs, of piety, only that you might have an opportunity of preferring the pleaſures of ſenſe and paſſion? Did he form you for another world, that you might ſhew the bravery of neglecting it, and the hardineſs of ſacrificing immortal perfection and happineſs to a little preſent, paſſing gratification; I always thought that the voice of honour called men upward, taught them to aſpire, prompted them to raiſe their fame by doing ſomething great and excellent, and, if poſſible, above their ſtation, rather than below it. But you, it ſeems, would have us to believe it nobler to deſcend, and hold it better to live and die, like a beaſt, than to climb the aſcent of thought and virtue, and by behaving like a man to become in due time like an angel. When you have thus debaſed and embruted every divine faculty, will you ſtill lay claim, and on that very

very account perhaps, to reaſon, to refinement, to ſuperiority of ſentiment? What inconſiſtency, what extravagance is here! But again,

2. Let me remind you, that, by being devoted to ſenſuality, you deſtroy your uſefulneſs and ſignificance in life. Your conſtitution is weakened, if not ruined; your ſpirit is enervated, if not diſſolved, and loſt for ever; the native vigour, and ſprightlineſs of youth are melted down, and abſorbed in debauchery. That generous ambition, which, beyond any thing on earth, incites to worthy deeds, is extinguiſhed in low and inglorious indulgences. Study hath little reliſh; buſineſs is a burden; application of every kind is inſupportable; all is diſſipation, debility, indolence, trifling; nothing manly, firm, or reſolved remains. Is this the road to real honour? But farther.

3. By perſevering in ſuch a courſe, you cannot fail to be injurious, as well as uſeleſs to mankind. You are injurious by being uſeleſs. Society has a claim on every man: it is entitled to the labour of his head, or of his hands, or both: he is bound to benefit others by his good offices, and to edify them by his good example. Therefore you would be unjuſt to the world, were you barely to ſhut yourſelf up from its intercourſe, and to neglect its intereſts. But if, living in it, you act in ſuch a manner, as directly to hurt theſe intereſts, and turn that intercourſe into an occaſion of corruption to thoſe you converſe with, are you not guilty of a double injury? You not only do no good: you do much harm. You not only deprive the public,

public, and your friends, of that exertion of your powers, and improvement of your opportunities, for the ſatisfaction and advantage of both, which they have a right to expect, but which are either wholly obſtructed, or greatly hindered by a diſorderly life: you make yourſelf a downright nuiſance in ſociety, a daily offence to virtuous men, and a ſtumbling-block to the weak and the unwary: you ſpread infection amongſt your neighbours and acquaintance, the worſt and deadlieſt kind of infection. A man that brings the plague with him, is not half ſo dangerous. The contagion you propagate kills the ſouls, as well as the bodies of thoſe it ſeizeth.

But who can deſcribe the miſery you cauſe to thoſe, with whom you are moſt nearly connected, and to whom, under God, you owe the greateſt obligations? For aught I know, you are born of a reſpectable and worthy family, the heir of a plentiful, perhaps of a noble fortune; and when you came into the world, it is very probable, your rejoicing parents bleſſed that bounteous providence, which gave them a man-child, and ſaid to each other, "This "one ſhall comfort us," ſhall be the ornament, the pride, and the ſtay of our houſe, and ſhall ſolace us amidſt the infirmities of age. They watched over your infant years, with inexpreſſible tenderneſs and care. As you grew in ſtature, you ſeemed to grow in wiſdom. They marked with joy and exultation the opening buds of ſenſe, and ingenuity, and worth.

They

They boaſted of your hopeful appearance, and pretty ſayings to all about them, who naturally congratulated them on the pleaſing occaſion. They ſpared no pains, they grudged no expence, to form you, as you advanced, to every quality and accompliſhment, that might become your birth, adorn your ſtation, grace your family, delight your friends, and enſure, through the divine bleſſing, your future utility, reputation, and happineſs. It may be that, for ſome time, you repaid their parental affection and labours, with the ſtricteſt duty and the faireſt improvements, by which you ſtill added to their hopes. Gracious Lord! how did their hearts heave with the biggeſt emotions of gratitude to thee, and their eyes overflow with tears of unutterable gladneſs, whilſt they beheld that young man in thoſe auſpicious days, ſetting out in the paths of glory, with an ardor that promiſed the happieſt progreſs in his after courſe! I would willingly ſuppreſs the ſequel, but in vain. Yet I need not ſpeak it. The cruel, the killing diſappointment I refer to in general, is already preſent to every imagination, and deeply felt by every ſenſible nature in this aſſembly. Happy thoſe parents, happy beyond the reach of language, who know not, by their perſonal experience, what ſuch a diſappointment imports! —— But is it nothing to you, my young hearers whom this deſcripton may anſwer; is it nothing to you to be a calamity to your father, " the heavineſs of your mother," and the ungracious author of ſo much ſhame and

grief

grief to both, as will probably " bring down " their grey hairs with ſorrow to the grave," if they have not already done it? Is this the way to reputation? Can you ſupport the idea of ſuch aggravated guilt?

4. You diſhonour your parent in heaven, the great original and end of your being, and of all its capacities and opportunities, whether for improvement or pleaſure. Can you forget him; forget him, did I ſay? Can you diſobey his laws, deſpiſe his power, even inſult that majeſty, whom angels worſhip with profoundeſt awe? Can you treat what belongs to him, or bears the ſtamp of his authority, with ſcorn and ridicule? Can you alienate thoſe affections and faculties, which he gave you for the purpoſes of piety and wiſdom; habitually alienate theſe from their glorious deſtination, and pervert them to the fooliſheſt, nay the vileſt purſuits? Once more: Can you quench that ray of divinity within you, which came from heaven, and was intended to raiſe you thither; can you quench it in the mire of ſenſual indulgence, and extinguiſh the deſires of immortality, that your maker kindled in your boſom, by ſuch diſorders, as render it your intereſt to " die like the " beaſts that periſh," and to mingle for ever with the clods of the valley? Can you do theſe things, and by your converſation and example teach others to do them, and not be guilty of horrible ingratitude, depravation, baſeneſs? And will you yet tell us of your ſenſe and ſpirit, and yet ſtyle yourſelf a Man of honour?

What abuſe of language! Shall I mention after this,

5. The ſtriking oppoſition between your conduct, and the ſentiments, diſpoſitions, and deportment of all the wiſe and good men that have ever exiſted? Need I go about to prove what is ſo exceeding palpable; or will you have the effrontery to affirm, that theſe have all been deceived, and blinded, from the beginning to this day; that all the worth and ſenſe the world has aſcribed to them, have been merely imaginary; that how much ſoever thoſe amongſt them who have been, or now are, moſt eminent in the opinion of the public, may have thought, or diſcourſed, or argued, or writ, in favour of virtue and religion, they have never been able to eſtabliſh their reality and excellence, or to demonſtrate, that there is any higher good than pleaſure, the pleaſure of the ſenſes, and of the fancy; in a word, that thoſe who have been, or now are, "the lights of the world," and the ornaments of humanity, deſerve no better character than that of a company of poor, prejudiced, deluded people, the children of ignorance, and the dupes of ſuperſtition? And will you venture to aver, that a ſet of men, whom you call Men of pleaſure, whom we call Infidels, Libertines, Profligates, the Refuſe and Dregs of nature, the Scourges and Plagues of mankind, the avowed enemies of God and goodneſs; that theſe abandoned men of pleaſure, with their mean and miſerable adherents, who follow them at ſome diſtance, licking

licking up their ſpittle, and labouring to overtake them; I mean, many an unfortunate youth, but lately initiated in the myſteries of iniquity; that theſe, I ſay, are the only perſons, who have learnt to think, and ſpeak, and act properly, with true ſpirit, manhood, and ſagacity. Oh! my brethren, to what a pitch of frenzy human beings are capable of arriving, when they can thus "call evil good, and good evil, "put light for darkneſs, and darkneſs for "light," and dignify with titles of fame and glory opinions and actions the moſt infamous! But this ſpecies of frenzy, like moſt others, has its lucid moments, and, as we hinted before, there are ſober moods every now and then recurring, when reaſon breaking looſe from the reſtraint and force which obſtructed its operation, will rebound upon the ſinner with double vengeance, by means of that elaſticity which belongs to it. He may ſtrive to bury and and extinguiſh under the load of intemperance the fire of conſcience: but that, like embers raked up under aſhes, will burſt out at times, and burn up all the hay and ſtubble of his vain and falſe confidence, and ſhew him by its piercing light that he counteracts the conviction of his own mind, which was,

6. The laſt particular on this head. The next morning, for inſtance, after a debauch, when you are once more alone, and the fumes of the former night's intemperance are evaporated, can you look back on the ſcene with calm exultation, and conſcious pride? Do you really think

think the better of yourſelf for ſuch "revelling, "and drunkeneſs," ſuch "chambering and "wantonneſs;" for mingling with prodigals, with debauchees, with gameſters, with harlots, and ſuch like creatures, the very off-ſcourings of the world? Do you indeed eſteem it creditable to have theſe for your companions? Would you have been glad to be found among them by a virtuous relation; or that any decent perſon of your acquaintance ſhould have detected you ſharing in their works of darkneſs?" I trow not. Why not? Why ſhun the light of day, and the eye of virtue? If your works are truly honourable, why be afraid leſt they ſhould be made manifeſt? What is the reaſon that you "love "darkneſs rather than light," if you are not inwardly convinced that "your deeds are "evil," and cannot bear the awful glance of wiſdom, nor the ſacred inſpection of the laws? For ſhame; a reaſonable being obliged to court the twilight, to fly, like a bird of darkneſs, from the face of the ſun, and, like the midnight plunderer, to hide his guilty viſage under the maſk of ſecrecy. Can you ſtand the compariſon? Do you not bluſh at the thought? Do you not feel yourſelf little and deſpicable at this moment? Are you not overawed by the ſuperior preſence of every worthy perſon you behold in this houſe? Are you not ſenſible, that you are—a ſlave, a very ſlave, the worſt of all ſlaves, and muſt remain ſuch, ſo long as you continue to "ſerve divers luſts and pleaſures," which ſay to you, "Go, and you go; Come,

"and

" and you come; Do this, and you do it;" leaving you no ſettled reſt from the dreadful drudgery, no generous, free, delightful command of yourſelf, but uſing you like a beaſt of burden, driving and hurrying you along through all the joyleſs, jading ways of vice and folly?

If through the repugnance of reaſon not yet wholly broke, or the languors of ſickneſs, or the reſtraints of diſeaſe, or the remonſtrances of friendſhip, or ſome other happy bar thrown in your road by a merciful providence, you ſtop a little in the path of deſtruction, take time to caſt your eye back, to reflect on your conduct, and attend to its conſequences, if perſiſted in, how are you ſhocked at the horrid ſpectacle? What indignation againſt yourſelf ariſeth within you? What abhorrence of your baſe accomplices? What reſolutions to relinquiſh them for ever, and aſſociate thenceforth with virtuous men? Then, in fine, you ſee, with a mixture of confuſion and horror, all the deformity and infamy of falſe pleaſure, and can enter with full conviction into the meaning of thoſe pointed words, " What fruit had you " in thoſe things, whereof you are now aſha- " med?" I will ſuppoſe theſe ſalutary ſentiments to continue a while, and your purpoſes of reformation to keep pace with them; tell me, whether in ſuch a ſerious conjuncture, and ſuch, I doubt not, you have experienced (the caſe is not uncommon; I have known thoſe that have been in it: they confeſſed the truth:), tell me, I ſay, whether you did not then perceive a certain

tain dignity of thought, a certain internal elevation above your former ſelf, which even ſurpriſed you, and told you that purity, purity alone was proportioned to your frame; that it alone, under God, could reſtore your original greatneſs, and preſerve you from ſinking into your wonted debaſement. If after all theſe ſober counſels, and thoſe ſecret dawnings of peace and joy, you have ſuffered yourſelf to fall into the mire again, and plunge perhaps deeper than ever, as tho' you had only returned a little to make your run more bold and violent, what freſh diſhonour, as well as guilt and ſorrow, muſt you be conſcious of incurring? and will you yet boaſt of the glory of your courſe, and give the lie to your own heart, by vaunting that you, and ſuch as you, are alone entitled to the praiſe of fortitude and freedom? Bleſſed maker! what a diſtracted creature is a young man abandoned to voluptuouſneſs! Whatever he may pretend, he is deſtitute of ſentiment in what relates to true glory, no leſs than of taſte in what belongs to genuine pleaſure. But he is equally devoid of prudence, as to his moſt important intereſts; which was,

III. The laſt point * I propoſed, as the finiſhing proof of his being void of underſtanding. This indeed is at firſt ſight ſo very plain a point, that it needs little more than to be propoſed. The perſons we are at preſent concerned with will not diſpute, that the courſe they follow is not in general the road to wealth. They will

* This head was omitted in the delivery, to ſave time.

allow

allow that the votaries of pleaſure muſt often be content to ſacrifice their fortunes on her altar; and frequently they even pique themſelves on nobly diſpiſing, as they are pleaſed to expreſs it, the ſordid conſiderations of gain and credit, when theſe would interfere with their more elegant gratifications. Now I will not ſay that thoſe conſiderations are of ſuch value, as to merit being preferred to all others, or made your principal objects. No: I would rather remind you, that you were formed for much greater ones, and that the real proſperity of "a man's life "conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things "which he poſſeſſeth," but in obtaining the proper ends of it, which are nothing leſs than the glorifying God, the benefiting men, and the bettering his own immortal ſpirit. But I would remind you at the ſame time, that, in ſubordination and ſubſerviency to theſe, reputation and ſucceſs in buſineſs, a decent competency, or, if it ſo pleaſe God, an honourable affluence in life, are valuable objects and very worthy of a wiſe man's attention. I ſay, they are ſo in a ſecondary view. In ſuch a view, "there is "nothing better," ſaith the preacher from the throne, "than for a man to eat and drink, and "make his ſoul enjoy good in his labour: this "is from the hand of God." The ſame great "perſon mentions it as an encouragement to the ſtudy of wiſdom, or the practice of religion, that "length of days is in her right hand, and "in her left hand riches and honour." We are likewiſe aſſured by a chriſtian apoſtle, that "godlineſs

" godlineſs is profitable for all things, having " the promiſe of the life that now is," as well " as of that which is to come." In ſhort, we are warranted to affirm, that wealth well gotten, enjoyed with gratitude, ſenſe, and moderation, improved in works of piety, friendſhip, and beneficence, is an important bleſſing, adds greatly to a man's comfort and conſequence here, and will hereafter prove ſo much treaſure laid up in heaven. May we not conclude then, that thoſe who call themſelves Men of pleaſure are fools, when they laugh at men of buſineſs, or ſpeak with deriſion of the virtuous gentleman, the honeſt citizen, or the induſtrious farmer, as a ſet of low, plodding, drudging characters, that know nothing of the value or enjoyment of life? What will thoſe arrogant men ſay, if poverty ſhould " come upon them like an arm- " ed man," with all the evils it brings along with it, to ſuch, eſpecially, as never felt its gripe before? How will you be able to bear it, ye ſons of ſoftneſs; " you that have lived in " pleaſure, and nouriſhed your hearts, as in a " day of ſlaughter?" With what accumulated weight will it fall on you, whoſe bodies and minds have been enfeebled and pampered with intemperance and ſloth? With what conſternation, diſtraction, deſpair will it overwhelm you? How will you that are ſtrangers to habits of prudence aud application, who perhaps were never poſſeſſed, or not thoroughly poſſeſſed, of any one uſeful art or talent for buſineſs, who probably have offended highly

ly your beſt friends, and loſt every degree of credit and eſtimation among the ſober part of mankind; how will you be capable of ſtruggling with adverſity, and reſcuing yourſelves from it? If diſeaſe brought upon you by your diſorders ſhould add its preſſure to all the reſt, what will you then do? What reſource then find under conſumption of body, joined with conſumption of fortune, ſharpened by ſo many attendant calamities; and, pray remember, rendered intolerable by anguiſh of mind, the remorſes, the horrors, the hideous images of miſery paſt, preſent, and to come, that will ruſh like an hoſt of enraged enemies upon your tortured breaſt? Oh terrible!—

I aſked juſt now, what reſource you will find amidſt this combination of woes? I think of one, one dreadful reſource. Nature ſhudders at the black idea. You can imagine what I mean. You have heard, I queſtion not, the horrible ſyſtem propoſed, and pleaded for, at your nocturnal orgies. In thoſe hours of madneſs perhaps you have applauded its patrons, ſtudied their deſperate arguments, and at laſt adopted an opinion, which in a chriſtian land muſt appear to men in their wits ſhocking to humanity, diſmal as hell, and daring as its fierceſt fiends. This reſource thoſe fiends, who ſport with human wretchedneſs, have certainly contrived, to make their prey, in ſuch caſes, more ſure and ſpeedy. May the merciful father forbid, you ſhould ever fly to that fatal refuge! What a refuge for an immortal being, to plunge him-

ſelf with his own hands into the depth of damnation, in order to elude his incumbent miſery!

But let us turn from the diſmal picture, and ſuppoſe in the next place, that a young man addicted to voluptuouſneſs eſcapes the miſchiefs which often overtake his brethren in iniquity, ariſing from a diſſipated fortune, a broken reputation, incenſed relations, and a ruined conſtitution; that he ſpins out a long life in a ſtate of external eaſe and indulgence, amongſt a ſet of people attached to him from different cauſes, perhaps fond of him for his parts, his politeneſs, his vivacity, or his natural goodneſs of temper, and that he makes ſhift to ſuppreſs, as much as poſſible, the painful convictions of a ſelf-condemning mind; need I tell him, that old age will come at laſt with its unavoidable decrepitude and frailties, and theſe not the leſs ſurely for the freedoms he now uſeth with his health? This he cannot but know, however he may contrive to overlook it. And when thoſe days of darkneſs overtake him, which will very probably be many, if a diſtemper or an accident doth not ſuddenly ſnap aſunder his weakened thread; when he is made "to "inherit," as the ſcripture ſpeaks, "the ſins of "his youth," and when through the ſurrounding gloom he reviews a life loſt in diſſipation, and proſtituted to ſenſuality, his talents by which he might have honoured God, and profited men, partly neglected, and partly abuſed, the remonſtrances of his friends, the principles of his education, the powerful checks

of

of his own mind, the calls of religion, the warnings of providence, the ſecret workings of God within him, generouſly intended for his recovery to virtue, all theſe ſlighted and oppoſed; how will he bear ſuch reflexions as the following? "Now my inglorious and criminal "courſe draws near an end: what have I gain-"ed by it? A few hours or days of giddy "amuſement, and guilty pleaſure, often daſhed "with inward diſguſt and bitterneſs, always "interrupted with long and tedious intervals "of inſipidity, languor, and dejection, at beſt "with ſcenes of laboured mirth, and forced "laughter, that left my heart, as they found "it, heavy and ſad. I have gained too the "boiſterous applauſe of worthleſs and witleſs "men, like myſelf, for "caſting in my lot with "them," and participating in their impiety "and debaucheries. I have gained—nothing "more. And what have I loſt? What have "I not loſt? My innocence, my honour, my "character, my peace of mind, the favour of "my maker, the intellectual, the moral, the "domeſtic, the divine joys, that ſweeten and "dignify exiſtence. I have loſt whatever was "worth living for. I have loſt—my ſoul. "The path I have trod has been marked all "along with folly, and vanity, and vexation. "A few ſteps more, and it will land me—"where?—in the place of weeping, where that "wretched ſenſualiſt lift up his eyes to heaven "in vain. For now, alas! it is too late to "offer the great Almighty the dregs of a diſ-

"ſolute,

" ſolute, polluted life, or attempt to vanquiſh " thoſe inveterate habits, which have enſlaved " my ſoul, and taken away my heart." In this mournful period, who, do you think, my brethren, will appear to the man I paint, truly prudent, and truly wiſe? The boaſtful votary of pleaſure, or the humble worſhipper of God? But

ONCE more. Let us follow the unhappy man a little further. Let us figure him at laſt laid upon the bed of death, bidding adieu to his ſorrowful friends, if any friends he hath, rolling his deſpairing eyes on every ſide. He looks back: his ill-ſpent youth, and the whole tract of his life paſt, preſents nothing to his view, but one wild waſte. He looks forward; all, all is wo unutterable. He receives the ſentence of death within himſelf. Nothing now " remains but a fearful looking for of wrath " and fiery indignation to conſume him." I fancy I ſee the poor creature juſt about to ſhoot the irremeable gulf of death, that death he uſed to talk of with ſuch an affectation of ſuperior indifference. Oh the ſhudderings, the ſtrong reluctance, the unimaginable convulſions that ſeize his nature, as he ſtands lingering on the tremendous precipice! He wiſhes for annihilation, which he often tried to believe in, but could never ſeriouſly be convinced of. The dreadful alternative entirely miſgives him. He meditates the devouring abyſs of eternity. He recoils, as he eyes it. Alas! alas! how he ſtruggles for life! Impotent efforts all. The

reſiſtleſs

reſiſtleſs decree is gone forth. He ſinks in final deſpair. The blackneſs of darkneſs cloſeth round him. He feels himſelf undone, without one ray of hope.——Is this the man, that laughed the children of wiſdom and temperance to ſcorn; that admired, extolled, and imitated ſenſualiſts and ſots? Is he of the ſame opinion, think ye, at the laſt? Ah, how different his ſentiments and language in the bower of pleaſure, and on the bed of death!

DID you ever viſit a dying voluptuary? Did you aſk him, what were his ſenſations then?—"How do you feel, Sir, in the view of your ap-"proaching end? Do you ſtill approve a vo-"luptuous life? Would you now recommend "it to thoſe about you? Would you lead it a-"gain yourſelf, could health and vigour be re-"ſtored?" How ſuch queſtions would pain and pierce him! If he uttered his real apprehenſions, with what pathetic, ſolemn, melting, death-inſpired eloquence, would he then expreſs his perfect deteſtation of the party he had choſen; would he then declare his heart-rending remorſe on that account; would he then pronounce thoſe young perſons only wiſe, who "remem-"bered their creator in the days of their "youth;" would he then admoniſh and conjure his companions and friends to fly the paths of unlawful pleaſure, and betake themſelves without a moment's delay to the ways of wiſdom and virtue!——"Men may live fools, but "fools they cannot die."

WOULD

WOULD it be reckoned an unſeaſonable digreſſion from the ſubject, or an inſupportable addition to this diſcourſe, were I now at laſt to addreſs myſelf to thoſe who have more immediately committed to them the care of youth, and to my younger brethren of the clergy who are preſent?

1. To parents, teachers, tutors, guardians, and maſters of families. Allow me, my friends, to call on you, with all the concern and ſolemnity which the importance of the caſe demands, to watch over your reſpective charges, as thoſe that watch for immortal ſouls. To do ſo is not the buſineſs of the miniſters of religion alone. Think, oh think! of what value and conſequence ſo many young minds muſt naturally be. Think how much will neceſſarily depend to them, to you, to ſociety, to religion, on the turn they ſhall take betimes. Think what riſks they run of taking a bad one, in ſo enſnaring an age, eſpecially a fatal bias to licentious pleaſure. Guard them on that ſide with particular vigilance. Be peculiarly ſolicitous about the books they read, the company they keep, and the friendſhips they form. What effects theſe will have upon them, it is eaſy to imagine; and ſhould you neglect them with regard to theſe, is there not reaſon to fear, that all your beſt inſtructions and wiſeſt monitions will be of little avail? They will but too readily contract a fondneſs for ſuch writings, ſuch converſation, and ſuch intimacies, as will ſooth and nouriſh their youthful paſſions, thoſe very paſſions,

paſſions, which you ſhould endeavour to correct and moderate. Need I inform you, how delicate a taſk that is, and what judicious attention it will require to prevent or check the irregular ſallies of young ſpirits, without diſguſting or depreſſing them? A form of pleaſure muſt needs be exhibited; ſomething to charm their imaginations, ſomething to captivate their hearts. The worthier and nobler ſenſibilities of nature muſt be indulged and cultivated. A feeling of true honour, the love of virtuous praiſe, the admiration of moral beauty, the amiable reciprocations of a refined and generous friendſhip, the ſweet ſympathies of natural affection, and domeſtic union, all theſe muſt be recommended and encouraged.

Above all the reſt, a ſenſe of religion muſt be ſtrongly inculcated, as that alone can be the ground-work of every virtue, no leſs than its higheſt finiſhing. But take care how you proceed in your attempts to enforce this divine principle. Beware leſt you damp or overlay the minds you deſire to profit. Be ſure you ſet forth religion in all her native ſmiles and graces. Let her never wear, in your diſcourſe, or manners, a forbidding countenance. That were to diſguiſe, to miſrepreſent the angel, to do her infinite wrong, and thoſe under your inſpection an irreparable injury. Should you frighten them away from piety by making them fancy its ſpirit gloomy, or feel its exerciſes burdenſome, they will conceive ſuch an averſion to it, as you will never be able to conquer. Whereas,

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if you convince them by all the arts which prudence can prompt, or ſweetneſs ſuggeſt, that there is nothing ſo beautiful as the character of true goodneſs, nothing ſo delightful as its practice, and ſhew them in your own temper and behaviour its happy and onamental influence; you will, by the bleſſing of the Moſt High, which you will ever implore, inſpire them with the love of that heavenly power. And when that heavenly power hath taken full poſſeſſion of their ſouls, where is the phantom of falſe delight, that can have force to ſeduce and detain them?

EXPECT not however to ſee them perfect, or eſtabliſhed all at once. Require not too much from their tender years. Make candid allowances for the gaiety, the giddineſs, and little innocent frolics of youth. Remember you were once young. Reſtrain them not from a ſober mirth, and decent amuſements ſuited to their age and ſtation. Let them plainly perceive that you are pleaſed to ſee them ſo, and that you are diſpoſed to deny them nothing in your power to grant, but what would hurt them. Give no quarter to falſehood, diſingenuity, or bad paſſions of any kind. But let not every trifling folly excite your diſpleaſure, or provoke your cenſure. Remonſtrate ſeldom, and never in wrath, but always with great ſerioufneſs, and great firmneſs. In fine, if you would give them the moſt valuable proof of your affection, fail not to conduct them to Jeſus, as the friend, the brother, and the reſtorer of their natures, who came down from heaven

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to lead them up thither, and guide their feet in the way of peace and joy, which is no other than the way of wiſdom and of holineſs. Tell them how much he loves the young, and with what gentleneſs "he carries the lambs in his "boſom." Ceaſe not to aſſure them, that "his "yoke is eaſy, and his burden light;" and that, if they will take theſe upon them chearfully, bear them ſteadily, and lean with unbounded confidence on his almighty ſupport and patronage, all ſhall be well. I wiſh it devoutly for their ſake, and yours.

2. As to you, my younger brethren of the clergy*; may I not hope that you will take kindly the parting counſel of one who loves you, and who will never, it is likely, have an opportunity of this ſort to addreſs you again? It would help, not a little, to alleviate the concern which it is natural for me to feel on removing from your ſociety, if I might indulge the pleaſing idea, that any thing I ſhall now offer may contribute to your uſefulneſs, or ſatisfaction.

I would begin with obſerving, that the riſing generation ſhould be a principal object of your care. From them chiefly muſt ariſe your hopes of ſucceſs in your profeſſon. They are not yet "hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin," nor hackneyed in the ways of the world:

* This and the preceding addreſs contain the ſubſtance of an extemporary effuſion, which the author has endeavoured to recollect, and ſet down more fully and diſtinctly.

And being young yourſelves, you can adviſe, admoniſh, and reprove them with the beſt grace, and the moſt efficacy. Your beſtowing peculiar notice on them, will always give pleaſure to ſuch as are connected with them, who will, on that account, liſten to your other inſtructions with greater advantage. Such as are not ſo connected will ſtill however approve of your conduct, if they are good: and if they are otherwiſe, if they are grown old in iniquity, or "accuſtomed to do evil," can you expect "the Ethiopian ſhould change his ſkin, or the "leopard his ſpots?" Nevertheleſs you may be aſſured, that the very veterans in vice themſelves will ſecretly applaud your endeavours to train the young to virtue and religion; ſo irreſiſtibly are they led by the force of truth to admire in ſpeculation thoſe venerable forms, which in practice they neglect to purſue. There is not, I am convinced, in this houſe, a parent, or a tutor ſo loſt to every ſentiment of worth, as not to wiſh, let their own characters be ever ſo fooliſh or ſo wicked, that thoſe young perſons whom nature or providence has entruſted to their inſpection, may be wiſe and virtuous.

When the younger part of your hearers diſcover, that they poſſeſs a particular ſhare in your regard and labours, a diſtinction ſo obliging to them will wonderfully conciliate their eſteem and confidence: and theſe, under God, will "open their hearts to attend to the words "that ſhall be ſpoken" by you. They will hardly

hardly be able to withſtand the arguments, the exhortations, the entreaties, of thoſe whom they find ſo deeply concerned about their edification and welfare; more eſpecially if you apply to their ingenuity mainly, or to that ſenſe of truth and probity, of praiſe and reputation, which originally belongs to their natures, and which will always afford you a handle, whereby to take hold of their conſciences, unleſs theſe ſhould become totally obdurate. And that, it is to be hoped, will rarely be the caſe, ſo long as they are young. Such a caſe, I am well perſuaded, would be yet more rare, if every working of modeſty, every tendency to good, every the ſmalleſt ſhoot or ſprouting of virtue were early and tenderly cheriſhed and ſupported.

By commending where you can, by rebuking only where you muſt, by never ſhocking or revolting them with an ill-judged ſeverity, whilſt you never foſter their pride or vanity by undeſerved, undiſtinguiſhing, or extravagant applauſe, you will preſerve a happy balance in their ſpirits. They will hearken to you with equal delight and reverence, as at once their friends and their teachers. And having thus engaged them to love and honour you, it is natural to think you will the more eaſily and effectually win them to the love and veneration of your maſter.

To recommend your maſter and his religion to their hearts, to all hearts, I need not ſay, ſhould be your ruling ambition, and your leading aim.

aim. " To know" and to preach " Chriſt " and him crucified," was the reſolution, the ſtudy, and the glory of the greateſt man, and the beſt miniſter, the chriſtian church did ever produce. To be called a preacher of chriſtianity, and not to preach Chriſt; to bear that honourable title, and to preach Plato or Epictetus, Antoninus or Seneca, excluſively of Chriſt, or preferably to him;——May God almighty forbid that ſo great a contradiction, ſuch a groſs prevarication, a conduct ſo abſurdly, ſo ſhamefully impious, ſhould ever be chargeable on any of you! Let the philoſophy of Greece and Rome have its due. Let thoſe who taught it meet with all the approbation and reſpect which they deſerve. And doubtleſs they deſerve a great deal. In many inſtances they thought well, and wrote better. Many of their ſayings concerning life, and morals, and natural theology, may be adopted with ſafety, and inculcated with advantage. I pity the man who affects to deſpiſe them. He betrays ignorance, or prejudice, or poorneſs of ſpirit, or all theſe together. But could we ſuppoſe a chriſtian preacher by profeſſion, giving them the preference, in his eſtimation and diſcourſes, to that truly divine philoſopher, who deſcended from the father of light and love to teach and to ſave mankind, I ſhould pity ſuch a man ſtill more, as deſtitute alike of taſte and worth, of underſtanding and honeſty. Never, oh never! my beloved brethren, be " aſhamed of the " goſpel of Chriſt." You never can have cauſe,

cauſe. Regard your relation to the Son of God, as your greateſt honour. Be wilfully guilty of nothing to forfeit the felicity connected with it, or to make the Son of God aſhamed of you.

Let the fond admirers of Paganiſm dote on a philoſophy, which the experience of ages has proved defective, feeble, inefficacious; as the reaſon of things ſhews it to be perplexed with uncertainty, warpt with error, and altogether diſproportioned to the demands of human nature. Let us, us I ſay, who profeſs ourſelves the diſciples of him who lived, and taught, and died in Judea, who ſpake and acted, as never man ſpake or acted, let us maintain with boldneſs, though with meekneſs too, the cauſe of our maſter.—Think again, of what maſter.—Of the ſweeteſt and ſublimeſt ſpirit, of the moſt enlightened, comprehenſive, and penetrating mind, of the moſt heroic benefactor, and meritorious ſufferer, in a word, of the moſt accompliſhed and dignified perſonage, that ever appeared on the theatre of humanity!

Let us ſtudy by day and by night the philoſophy of the evangelical ſyſtem. It were eaſy to evince, that no inſtitution, no diſcipline, which we are acquainted with, is adapted, like the goſpel, to the frame and the ſtate of man. This in general I will venture to affirm, that there is not in the human breaſt a ſingle point of ſenſibility, a ſingle ſpring of action, any one faculty, principle or perception relating to moral,

ral, ſpiritual, or eternal things, which the philoſophy of Jeſus Chriſt is not calculated to ſtrike, to move, to direct, to govern; at the ſame time that the diſtempers, the diſtreſſes, the weakneſſes, and the wants of our nature, are moſt wiſely and generouſly provided for: ſo that the preacher who heſitates a moment to diſplay or to preſs the doctrines, the motives, and the grace of the New Teſtament, is a ſtranger to his own nature, and in effect its enemy.

To diſplay and to preſs theſe, or, in other words, to explain and to enforce the whole counſel of God, reſpecting the reſtoration of fallen man, ſo far as that is revealed, together with the grand, immortal truths and laws of natural religion; to do this with ability and ſucceſs, is ſurely one of the nobleſt and moſt delightful of all employments. To acquit yourſelves well here, what application, what zeal, or what energy, if rightly directed, can be too much? From what quarter ſhould you not be willing to borrow light and aid, in the glorious art of true eloquence? You may learn it, my friends, from Tully; you may learn it from Demoſthenes: I add with peculiar pleaſure, you may learn it from Paul of Tarſus: I ſubjoin with the higheſt joy, you may learn it from Jeſus of Nazareth.

Let it always be your care to ſpeak to the heart, to enter into the conſcience, to make men acquainted with themſelves. Contemn every

every ornament that ſerves not, in ſome ſhape, to the purpoſe of perſuaſion, and every ſpecies of addreſs that doth not tend to render the hearers better or wiſer. Never reſt in general, or vague harangues. Such, believe me, how ingenious or elegant ſoever, are always "from "the purpoſe of" preaching, a principal part of "whoſe end, both at the firſt and now, was and "is to hold, as it were, the mirror up to na-"ture, to ſhew virtue her own feature, vice her "own image, and the very age and body of "the time its form and preſſure." I ſhall readily be pardoned for applying to this ſubject, with a ſmall variation, thoſe beautiful words of the greateſt human writer in the world.

I conjure you, brethren, "before God, and "the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge the "quick and the dead at his appearing, and his "kingdom;" never ſacrifice utility or truth to ſhew or popularity. Let no deſire of applauſe tempt you to ſpoil your diſcourſes with affected rhetoric or vain philoſophy, on the one hand, or to diſgrace them with vulgarity and cant, on the other. Let no dread of bigots, however violent or numerous, deter you from holding up to the people a high ſtandard of chriſtian morals. Let no reſpect for libertines, of what rank or parts ſoever, turn you aſide from the ſimplicity of "the truth, as it is in Jeſus." A virtuous chriſtianity, that is, genuine chriſtianity, is the cauſe of heaven. It will always bear you out. If you have felt its ſacred operation, are taken with its beauty, and awed by

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that majeſty which it hath derived from its author, bleſſed Saviour! what fortitude and fervour in preaching it will theſe inſpire!

If indeed you have undergone the diſcipline of repentance, if you have paſſed the ſtrait gate, and entered the narrow way, that leads to life eternal, if the proſpects which faith unfolds have opened on your illuminated eye, and that celeſtial ſpirit who proceeds from Jeſus has deſcended into your boſoms; what force of feeling, what depth of diſcernment in the beſt things, what unction of ſentiment and language, what unſtudied allurement and dignity of manner, will ordinarily accompany your performances! How clearly will you trace, and how ſenſibly deſcribe, from the fund of your own experience, the movements of the ſoul, the meaſures of conſcience, the ſalutary pains of converſion, the ſecret ſtruggles of virtue, the aſpirations of an advancing piety, in ſhort, the whole riſe and progreſs of the divine life!

Let me particularly remind you, that nothing will more aſſiſt or animate you in the exerciſes of the pulpit, than the devotions of the cloſet; provided theſe are humble and liberal, ſimple and exalted, ſerious and fervent. In that caſe, they will be—what will they be?—a rich, perennial ſpring of inſpiration. They will diffuſe through your public addreſſes, both to God and to man, a certain ethereal influence, that will be univerſally ſeen and felt. Oh, how different from the conſtraint, the formality, the frigidity,

frigidity, the deadneſs, you have ſometimes witneſſed!

After all, let it be remembered, that the benediction of God alone can give proper power to all your miniſtrations. I hope you daily aſk it. But remember likewiſe, you can only expect it, in the road of righteouſneſs. And therefore to all your improvements, and all your exertions, fail not (I will take the liberty to ſay it to the whole order preſent), fail not to join purity of heart and ſanctity of manners. Practiſe as much as poſſible the breeding of gentlemen; but never drop the character of clergymen. Between theſe, when truly underſtood, there is, I am perſuaded, no incompatibility. But if there were, it is eaſy to ſee which of the two, in point of propriety and uniformity, ought to give place in your deportment. An engaging demeanour, it is certain, can never be inconſiſtent with clerical decorum. But where-ever the faſhion of the times, or the folly of men would attempt to build either pleaſure or refinement on the ruins of virtue, may we have the firmneſs in our behaviour, to ſink the man of the world in the man of God. "Finally, "brethren, farewell: be perfect, be of good "comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and "the God of love and peace ſhall be with you." Amen.

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